

THE
ROCKY ROAD
TO DUBLIN

*The Adventures of
Seumas Beg*

•

By JAMES
STEPHENS

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THE ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN

**THE ADVENTURES OF
SEUMAS BEG**



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TORONTO

THE
ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN

*The Adventures of
Seumas Beg*

BY

JAMES STEPHENS

AUTHOR OF "THE CROCK OF GOLD," "THE DEMI-
GODS," "THE HILL OF VISION," ETC.

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**THE ADVENTURES OF
SEUMAS BEG**

THE CHERRY TREE

COME from your bed, my drowsy gentleman!

*And you, fair lady, rise and braid
your hair,*

*And let the children wash, if wash they
can;*

*If not, assist you them, and make
them fair*

*As is the morning and the morning sky,
And every tree and bush and bird in
air.*

*The sun climbed on the heights three
hours ago,*

*He laughed above the hills and they
were glad;*

12 THE CHERRY TREE

*With bubbled pearl he made the rivers
flow*

*And laced their mists in silver, and
he clad*

*The meads in fragrant pomp of green
and gold,*

*And bade the world forget it had been
sad.*

*So lift yourself, good sir! and you,
sweet dame,*

*Unlash your evening eyes of pious
grey;*

*Call on the children by each lovèd name,
And set them on the grass and let
them play;*

*And play with them a while, and sing
with them*

Beneath the cherry bush a roundelay.

BREAKFAST TIME

THE sun is always in the sky
Whenever I get out of bed,
And I often wonder why
It's never late. — My sister said
She did not know who did the trick,
And that she did not care a bit,
And I should eat my porridge quick.
. . . I think it's mother wakens it.

IN THE ORCHARD

THERE was a giant by the Orchard
Wall

Peeping about on this side and on
that,
And feeling in the trees: he was as
tall

As the big apple tree, and twice as
fat:

His beard was long, and bristly-black,
and there

Were leaves and bits of grass stuck in
his hair.

He held a great big club in his right
hand,

And with the other felt in every tree

For something that he wanted. You
could stand

Beside him and not reach up to his
knee

So mighty big he was — I feared he
would

Turn round, and trample down to
where I stood.

I tried to get away, but, as I slid

Under a bush, he saw me, and he
bent

Far down and said, "*Where is the
Princess hid?*"

I pointed to a place, and off he
went —

But while he searched I turned and
simply flew

Round by the lilac bushes back to you.

DAY AND NIGHT

WHEN the bright eyes of the day
Open on the dusk, to see
Mist and shadow fade away
And the sun shine merrily,
Then I leave my bed and run
Out to frolic in the sun.

Through the sunny hours I play
Where the stream is wandering,
Plucking daisies by the way ;
And I laugh and dance and sing,
While the birds fly here and there
Singing on the sunny air.

When the night comes, cold and slow,
And the sad moon walks the sky,

When the whispering wind says “*Boh,*
 Little boy !” and makes me cry,
By my mother I am led
Home again and put to bed.

THE DEVIL'S BAG

I SAW the Devil walking down the lane
Behind our house. — There was a
 heavy bag
Strapped tightly on his shoulders, and
 the rain
Sizzled when it hit him. He picked
 a rag
Up from the ground and put it in his
 sack,
And grinned and rubbed his hands.
 There was a thing
Moving inside the bag upon his back —
It must have been a soul! I saw it
 fling
And twist about inside, and not a
 hole

Or cranny for escape! Oh, it was sad!
I cried, and shouted out, "*Let out
that soul!*"

But he turned round, and, sure, his
face went mad,

And twisted up and down, and he
said "*Hell!*"

And ran away. . . . Oh, mammy!
I'm not well.

A VISIT FROM ABROAD

A SPECK went blowing up against the
sky

As little as a leaf: then it drew
near

And broadened. — “It’s a bird,” said I,
And fetched my bow and arrows.

It was queer!

It grew up from a speck into a blot,
And squattered past a cloud; then
it flew down

All crumply, and waggled such a lot
I thought the thing would fall. — It
was a brown

Old carpet where a man was sitting
snug

Who, when he reached the ground,
began to sew

A VISIT FROM ABROAD 21

A big hole in the middle of the rug,
And kept on peeping everywhere
to know
Who might be coming — then he gave
a twist
And flew away. . . . I fired at him
but missed.

THE WOOD OF FLOWERS

I WENT to the Wood of Flowers
 (No one was with me) ;
I was there alone for hours.
 I was happy as could be
In the Wood of Flowers.

There was grass on the ground,
 There were buds on the tree,
And the wind had a sound
 Of such gaiety.
That I was as happy
 As happy could be,
In the Wood of Flowers.

THE WHITE WINDOW

THE moon comes every night to peep
Through the window where I lie,
And I pretend to be asleep ;
But I watch the moon as it goes by,
And it never makes a sound.

It stands and stares, and then it goes
To the house that's next to me,
Stealing on its tippy-toes,
To peep at folk asleep maybe ;
And it never makes a sound.

MIDNIGHT

AND then I wakened up in such a fright ;
I thought I heard a movement in
the room
But did not dare to look ; I snuggled
right
Down underneath the bedclothes —
then the boom
Of a tremendous voice said, “*Sit up,*
lad,
And let me see your face.” So up
I sat,
Although I didn’t want to. I was
glad
I did though, for it was an angel
that

Had called me, and he said, he'd come
to know

Was I the boy who wouldn't say
his prayers

Nor do his sums, and that I'd have
to go

Straight down to hell because of
such affairs.

. . . I said I'd be converted and do
good

If he would let me off — he said he
would.

BEHIND THE HILL

BEHIND the hill I met a man in green
Who asked me if my mother had
gone out?
I said she had. He asked me had I
seen
His castle where the people sing and
shout
From dawn to dark, and told me that
he had
A crock of gold inside a hollow tree,
And I could have it. — I wanted money
bad
To buy a sword with, and I thought
that he
Would keep his solemn word; so, off
we went.

He said he had a pound hid in the
crock,

And owned the castle too, and paid no
rent

To any one, and that you had to
knock

Five hundred times. I asked, "*Who
reckoned up?*"

And he said, "*You insulting little
pup!*"

THE SECRET

I WAS frightened, for a wind
 Crept along the grass to say
Something that was in my mind
 Yesterday —

Something that I did not know
 Could be found out by the wind,
I had buried it so low
 In my mind.

APRIL SHOWERS

THE leaves are fresh after the rain,
The air is cool and clear,
The sun is shining warm again,
The sparrows hopping in the lane
Are brisk and full of cheer.

And that is why we dance and play,
And that is why we sing,
Calling out in voices gay,
We will not go to school to-day
Or learn anything :

It is a happy thing, I say,
To be alive on such a day.

THE TURN OF THE ROAD

I WAS playing with my hoop along
the road

Just where the bushes are, when,
suddenly,

There came a shout. — I ran away and
stowed

Myself beneath a bush, and watched
to see

What made the noise, and then, around
the bend,

I saw a woman running. She was
old

And wrinkle-faced, and had big teeth.
— The end

Of her red shawl caught on a bush
and rolled

THE TURN OF THE ROAD 31

Right off her, and her hair fell down. —

Her face

Was awful white, and both her eyes
looked sick,

And she was talking queer. “*O God
of Grace!*”

Said she, “*where is the child?*” and
flew back quick

The way she came, and screamed, and
shook her hands;

. . . Maybe she was a witch from
foreign lands.

THE CORAL ISLAND

HIS arms were round a chest of oaken
wood,
It was clamped with brass and iron
studs, and seemed
An awful weight. After a while he
stood
And I stole near to him. — His white
eyes gleamed
As he peeped secretly about; he laid
The oaken chest upon the ground,
then drew
A great knife from his belt, and stuck
the blade
Into the ground and dug. The clay
soon flew
In all directions underneath a tree,

And when the hole was deep he put
the box
Down there, and threw the clay back
cunningly,
Stamping the ground quite flat;
then like a fox
He crept among the trees. . . . I
went next day
To dig the treasure up, but I lost my
way.

THE COW

Cow, Cow !

I and thou

Are looking at each other's eyes :

You are lying on the grass

Eating every time I pass,

And you do not seem to be

Ever in perplexity :

You are good I'm sure, and not

Fit for nothing but the pot :

For your bearing is so kind,

And your quietness so wise :

Cow, Cow !

I and thou

Are looking at each other's eyes.

THE OLD MAN

AN old man sat beneath a tree
 Alone ;
So still was he
 That, if he had been carved in stone,
He could not be
 More quiet or more cold :
He was an ancient man
 More than
A thousand ages old.

WHAT THE SNAKE SAW

A LITTLE girl and a big, ugly man
Went down the road. The girl was
crying
And asking to go home, but when she
ran
He hit her on the head and sent her
flying,
And called her a young imp, and said
he'd break
Her neck unless she went with him,
and then
He smacked her on the cheek. — I was
a snake
At that time crawling through a
robber's den,

WHAT THE SNAKE SAW 37

And diamonds were sticking to my
tongue —

(That's the best dodge), but when
I saw the way

He beat the little girl I up and flung
A stone at him. My aim was bad
that day

Because I hit the girl . . . and she
did sing!

But he jumped round and cursed like
anything.

THE HORSE

A SPARROW hopped about the street,
And he was not a bit afraid ;
He flew between a horse's feet,
And ate his supper undismayed :
I think myself the horse knew well
The bird came for the grains that fell.

For his eye was looking down,
And he danced the corn about
In his nose-bag, till the brown
Grains of corn were tumbled out ;
And I fancy that he said,
“Eat it up, young Speckle-Head !”

The driver then came back again,
He climbed into the heavy dray ;

And he tightened up the rein,
 Cracked his whip and drove away.
But when the horse's ribs were hit,
The sparrow did not care a bit.

THE APPLE TREE

I WAS hiding in the crooked apple tree,
Scouting for Indians, when a man
came ;
I thought it was an Indian, for he
Was running like the wind. — There
was a flame
Of sunlight on his hand as he drew
near,
And then I saw a knife gripped in
his fist.
He panted like a horse ; his eyes were
queer,
Wide-open, staring frightfully, and,
hist !
His mouth stared open like another
eye,

THE APPLE TREE 41

And all his hair was matted down
with sweat.

I crouched among the leaves for fear
he'd spy

Where I was hiding, so he did not
get

His awful eyes on me, but like the
wind

He fled as if he heard something
behind.

THE APPOINTMENT

TREE! you are years standing there,
Gripping tight to the side of the hill,
And your branches are spread on the
air,

While you stand so sad and so still,
And you do not complain
When you're wet with the rain,
Though I think you have often been
ill.

I would like (but it could not be done,
So you must not keep me to my
word)

To take you away when the sun
Goes down, and the breezes are
stirred,

And hug you in bed
With myself, till you said
That to sleep on a hill was absurd.

O beautiful tree ! when the night
Is dark, and the winds come and
scold,
I would love then to cuddle you tight,
For I fear you will die of the cold ;
But you are so tall,
And my bed is so small,
That it could not be done, I am
told.

My mother is calling for me,
And the baby is wanting to play,
I shall have to go home now, you see,
But I'll give you a kiss if I may :
I would stay if I could,
But a child must be good,
So I must, darling tree, go away.

I will leave you my pencil and slate,
And this little pin from my frock ;

44 THE APPOINTMENT

But now I must go for it's late,
And my mother is rattling the lock :
So good-bye, darling dear,
I'll come back, never fear,
In the morning at seven o'clock.

CHECK

THE night was creeping on the ground ;
She crept and did not make a sound
Until she reached the tree, and then
She covered it, and stole again
Along the grass beside the wall.

I heard the rustle of her shawl
As she threw blackness everywhere
Upon the sky and ground and air,
And in the room where I was hid :
But no matter what she did
To everything that was without
She could not put my candle out.

So I stared at the night, and she
Stared back solemnly at me.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG

I WILL not know when I am dead
If sun or moon is overhead ;
I'll stretch out flat without a sound
Inside a box beneath the ground,
And never rise again to see
Branches lifting on a tree,
Nor hear the song the finches sing
In the spring.

I'll not, while sunny ages go,
Lift a hand or wag a toe ;
But in a wooden box will be
Hidden for eternity
From sea and sun, from sight and
 sound,
From touch of people, voice of friend,

WHEN I WAS YOUNG 47

From all that makes my heart to
bound

Denying such an end :

It is so strange — I wonder why

People die !

**THE ROCKY ROAD TO
DUBLIN**

THE PATRIOT'S BED

WHEN a son you shall desire,
Pray to water and to fire ;
But when you would have a daughter,
Pray to fire and then to water.

GRAFTON STREET

At four o'clock, in dainty talk,
Lords and lovely ladies walk,
With a gentle dignity,
From the Green to Trinity.

And at five o'clock they take,
In a Café, tea and cake,
Then they call a carriage, and
Drive back into fairyland.

PORTOBELLO BRIDGE

SILVER stars shine peacefully,
The Canal is silver, the
Poplars bear with modest grace
Gossamers of silver lace,
And the turf bank wears with glee
Black and silver filigree.

YORK STREET

If in winter you shall drive
Birds from crumbs you shall not
 thrive,
But if you feed them they will fly
To sing it sweetly on the sky.

So throw up the window, and
Scatter with a lavish hand,
Taking care you do not spill
Flower-pots from the window-sill,

Singing, "Ireland shall be free
From the centre to the sea";
Singing bravely once again,
"We are Dan O'Connell's Men."

THE FIFTEEN ACRES

I CLING and swing
On a branch, or sing
Through the cool, clear hush of Morn-
ing, O :
Or fling my wing
On the air, and bring
To sleepier birds a warning, O ;
That the night's in flight,
And the sun's in sight,
And the dew is the grass adorning, O :
And the green leaves swing
As I sing, sing, sing,
Up by the river,
Down the dell,
To the little wee nest,
Where the big tree fell,
So early in the morning, O.

56 THE FIFTEEN ACRES

I flit and twit
In the sun for a bit
When his light so bright is shining, O :
Or sit and fit
My plumes, or knit
Straw plaits for the nest's nice lining, O :
And she with glee
Shows unto me
Underneath her wings reclining, O :
And I sing that Peg
Has an egg, egg, egg,
Up by the oat-field,
Round the mill,
Past the meadow,
Down the hill,
So early in the morning, O.

I stoop and swoop
On the air, or loop
Through the trees, and then go soaring, O :
To group with a troop
On the gusty poop
While the wind behind is roaring, O :

I skim and swim
By a cloud's red rim
And up to the azure flooring, O :
And my wide wings drip
As I slip, slip, slip
Down through the rain-drops,
Back where Peg
Broods in the nest
On the little white egg,
So early in the morning, O.

COLLEGE GREEN

WHEN you meet an ancient man
Be as silent as you can,
So when old age comes to you
Courtesies shall gather too.

And King Billy's horse will start
From our street and from our heart,
When each Irishman shall be
Perfected in courtesy.

MOUNT STREET

HERE and there on the wings of night
A fleck of blue and purple light,
A scrap of cloud, a bird, a star,
A comet hurrying afar
On the abyss, and the moon
Standing in her silver shoon.

On the summit of the sky,
Delicate and proud and high,
The silver moon on a silver sea
Spins her silver broidery
While the stars send down a light
Here and there on the wings of night.

WESTLAND ROW

EVERY Sunday there's a throng
Of pretty girls, who trot along
In a pious, breathless state
(They are nearly always late)
To the Chapel, where they pray
For the sins of Saturday.

They have frocks of white and blue,
Yellow sashes they have too,
And red ribbons show each head
Tenderly is ringleted ;
And the bell rings loud, and the
Railway whistles urgently.

After Chapel they will go,
Walking delicately slow,

Telling still how Father John
Is so good to look upon,
And such other grave affairs
As they thought of during prayers.

THE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

WHO knows a thing and will not tell
Shall spend eternity in hell ;
But he who learns and teaches free
In heaven spends eternity.

Around the Leinster Lawn we go
Into Molesworth Street, and so
To Saint Stephen's Green, where we
Hang a banner on a tree.

THE CANAL BANK

I KNOW a girl,
And a girl knows me,
And the owl says, what?
And the owl says, who?
But what we know
We both agree
That nobody else
Shall hear or see,
It's all between
Herself and me :
To wit? said the owl,
To woo, said I,
To-what, to-wit, to-woo !

BY ANA LIFFEY

IF you come to live with me
I will sing so heartily
In your honour that you will
Stay to wonder at my skill.

In your honour I will fill
The world with songs of triumph, till
You and I and Time are old
Pipers of the Age of Gold.

Time and you and I will hold,
Everywhere by field and fold,
Concerts of content, and be
Known afar for jollity.

Everywhere by fold and field
We will wander well-agreed,
So I sing right heartily
Come along and live with me.

FROM HAWK AND KITE

Poor frightened, fluttered, silent one !
If we had seen your nest of clay
We would have passed it by, and gone,
Nor frightened you away.

For there are others guard a nest
From hawk and kite and lurking foe,
And more despair is in their breast
Than you can ever know.

Shield the nests where'er they be,
On the ground or on the tree ;
Guard the poor from treachery.

THE GOMBEEN-MAN

I PUT the sky into my pocket,
And the sea into my locket,
And into my breeches-band
I put the land.

So I was trotting off to share,
Among my comrades in the lair,
Our profits, when a peeler came
And took my name.

And now I'm in the County Gaol!
Will anybody be my bail?
Will anybody be my bail
And take me from the County Gaol?

BERESFORD PLACE

THE man who has and does not give
Shall break his neck, and cease to live;
But he who gives without a care
Shall gather rubies from the air.

AT THE FAIR

THE lark shall never come to say
To a gombeen-man, "Good day,"
And the lark shall never cry
To a kindly man, "Good-bye."

See the greedy gombeen-man
Taking everything he can
From man and woman, dog and cat —
And the lark does not like that.

THE FUR COAT

I WALKED out in my Coat of Pride,
I looked about on every side,
And said the mountains should not be
Just where they were, and that the
 sea

Was badly placed, and that the beech
Should be an oak — and then from
 each

I turned in dignity as if
They were not there: I sniffed a
 sniff,

And climbed upon my sunny shelf,
And sneezed a while, and scratched
 myself.

DUBLIN MEN

A DUBLIN man will frown when he
Hears a tale of villainy ;
But when a kindness you relate
He swings and whistles on the gate.

O'CONNELL BRIDGE

IN Dublin town the people see
Gorgeous clouds sail gorgeously,
They are finer, I declare,
Than the clouds of anywhere.

A swirl of blue and red and green,
A stream of blinding gold, a sheen
From silver hill and pearly ridge
Comes each evening on the bridge.

So when you walk in a field look down
Lest you tramp on a daisy's crown,
But in a city look always high
And watch the beautiful clouds go by.

CHARLOTTE STREET

INSIDE a soap shop, down a lane,
A big bee buzzed on a window-pane,

Climbing the cold glass up and down ;
Bee, what brought you into town ?

You are tired and hungry and scarce
 alive,
Poor old Shaggy-Tail ! where's your
 hive ?

GEORGE'S STREET

LISTEN ! if but women were
Half as kind as they are fair,
There would be an end to all
Miseries that do befall.

Cloud and wind would run together
In a dance of sunny weather,
And the happy trees would throw
Gifts to travellers below.

Then the lion, meek and mild,
With the lamb would, side by side,
Couch him friendly, and would be
Innocent of enmity.

Then the Frozen Pole would go,
Tossing off his fields of snow,
And would shake delighted feet
With the girls of George's Street.

These, if women only were
Half as kind as they are fair.

HOLLES STREET

THROUGH the air,
Everywhere, the rain is falling ;
Brawling on house and tree :
On every place that you can see
The rain drops go ;
The roofs are wet, the walls, the
ground below.

Midnight has come ;
Now all the people stretch them blind
and dumb
Each in a bed
Save I who sit and listen overhead
Unto the rain
Splashing upon the roof and window-
pane.

Midnight ! and I
Can get no sleep, nor can the sky.

KATTY GOLLAGHER

THE hill is bare : I only find
The grass, the sky and one small tree
Tossing wildly on the wind ;
And that is all there is to see :
A tree, a hill, a wind, a sky
Where nothing ever passes by.

CORK HILL

COME all ye happy children, and
Gather round me hand in hand,
Dancing to the merry cry,
“See the Robbers Passing By.”

Past the Castle we will dance
To the Mansion House, and prance
Back by George’s Street and cry
“See the Robbers Passing By.”

Gather then ye children all
Into ranks processional,
Marching to the merry cry,
“See the Robbers Passing By.”

THE PIPER

SHEPHERD ! while the lambs do feed
And you rest beneath a tree,
Pipe upon an oaten reed
Merrily and merrily.

Should it rain do not forbear —
Rain comes from the happy sky —
Tune us now a quiet air
Till the shower passes by.

Back the sun will come in gold !
Pipe away, my dear, until
Evening brings the lambs to fold —
You may weep then, if you will.

THE SHADOW

SILENCE comes upon the night,
Gone is all the cheerful day,
The moon has disappeared from sight
Every star has gone away.

Sinking through the void, and thence
Disappearing, star and sky,
In the stern and black immense
That has blinded every eye.

Silence crouches on the land
In the street a shadow lies
Cloaked in velvet wrappings, and
With a mask upon her eyes.

Anonymous and terrible
Mother of the primal ray,
Only night because thou art
In thyself excess of day.

CUSTOM HOUSE QUAY

WHEN a Dublin man shall say,
"Give me a little bread, I pray,"
If you do not give him bread
You will be hungry when he is fed.

And let no priest or magistrate
Scowl upon the poor man's plate,
Asking him the question sly
To which no one can reply.

STEPHEN'S GREEN

THE wind stood up and gave a shout ;
He whistled on his fingers, and
Kicked the withered leaves about
And thumped the branches with his
hand,
And said he'd kill, and kill, and kill,
And so he will, and so he will.

THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

As I stood at the door
Sheltered out of the wind,
Something flew in
Which I hardly could find.

In the dim, gloomy doorway
I searched till I found
A dry, withered leaf
Lying down on the ground.

With thin, pointed claws
And a dry, dusty skin, —
Sure a hall is no place
For a leaf to be in !

COLLEGE OF SURGEONS 85

O where is your tree
And your summer and all,
Poor dusty leaf
Whistled into a hall?



MERRION SQUARE

GREY clouds on the tinted sky,
A drifting moon, a quiet breeze
Drooping mournfully to cry
In the branches of the trees.

The crying wind, the sighing trees,
The ruffled stars, the darkness falling
Down the sky, and on the breeze
A belated linnet calling.

THE BARE TREES

UNFORTUNATES, on the bare tree !
I mourn for ye
That have no place to house,
But on those winter-white, cold boughs
 To sit,
 (How far apart ye sit)
And brood
In this wide, wintry solitude
 That has no song at all to hearten it.

Fly away, little birds !
 Fly away to Spain,
Stay there all the winter
 Then come back again ;
Come back in the summer
 When the leaves are thick ;
Little, weeny, cold birds,
 Fly away quick.

DUNPHY'S CORNER

PACING slowly down the road
Black horses go, with load on load
Of Dublin people dead, and they
Will be covered up in clay.

Ere their friends go home, each man
Will shake his head, and drain a can
To Dublin people we will meet
Not again in Grafton Street.

THE DODDER BANK

WHEN no flower is nigh, you might
Spy a weed with deep delight ;
So, when far from saints and bliss,
God might give a sin a kiss.

WHITE FIELDS

IN the winter children go
Walking in the fields of snow
Where there is no grass at all,
And the top of every wall,
Every fence, and every tree
Is as white as white can be.

Pointing out the way they came,
(Every one of them the same)
All across the fields there be
Prints in silver filigree ;
And their mothers find them so
By the footprints in the snow.

THE PAPS OF DANA

THE mountains stand and stare
around,

They are far too proud to speak;
Altho' they're rooted in the ground

Up they go, peak after peak,
Beyond the tallest tree, and still
Soaring over house and hill
Until you'd think they'd never stop
Going up, top over top,
Into the clouds —

Still I mark
That a sparrow or a lark
Flying just as high can sing
As if he'd not done anything.

I think the mountains ought to be
Taught a little modesty.

DONNELLY'S ORCHARD

HE who locks a gate doth close
Pity's heart against his woes ;
But who opens one shall find
God is standing just behind.

DONNYBROOK

I SAW the moon so broad and bright
Sailing high on a frosty night :

And the air swung far and far between
The silver disc and the orb of green :

While here and there a wisp of white
Cloud-film swam on the misty light :

And crusted thickly on the sky,
High and higher and yet more high,

Were golden star-points dusted
through
The great, wide, silent vault of blue :

Then I said to me — God is good
And the world is fair — and where I
stood

I knelt me down and bent my head,
And said my prayers, and went to bed.

THE END

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